



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Paul Eakins
Public Information Officer
213-257-2000
PEakins@da.lacounty.gov
Twitter: @LADAOOffice

April 2, 2019

Palmdale, Littlerock Store Operators Charged in \$6 Million Food Stamps Scam

Three women who operated convenience stores in Palmdale and Littlerock are among 17 people charged in a food stamps-for-cash scam that allegedly defrauded the federal government out of an estimated \$6 million, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced today.

Maria Teresa Ramirez (dob 7/3/81) is charged with eight counts of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) fraud; Yessica Raquel Garay (dob 1/17/82) faces two counts of SNAP fraud; and Maria Magdalena Salgado (dob 5/29/64), aka Maria Magdalena Gonzalez, is charged with seven counts of SNAP fraud.

The trio also are charged with one count each of conspiracy to defraud another of property and misappropriation of public funds. The charges include allegations of taking more than \$500,000 through fraud and embezzlement.

The 14 other people charged in the criminal complaint allegedly used their SNAP cards to receive cash at the stores. Case BA476430 was filed for arrest warrant on March 27.

Arraignment has not yet been scheduled for any of the 17 defendants.

From 2011 to 2017, Ramirez, Garay and Salgado are accused of illegally exchanging SNAP benefits, commonly known as food stamps, for cash, said Deputy District Attorney Michael Fern of the Cyber Crime Division. They allegedly charged fictitious SNAP-eligible purchases to the benefit cards and collected fees for the transactions.

Ramirez owned stores in Palmdale and the unincorporated community of Littlerock, and Salgado, who is Ramirez's mother, also owned one in Palmdale. Garay worked for Ramirez at her Palmdale store before taking over the business. The women are all Palmdale residents.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is named as a victim in the criminal complaint, conducted an investigation of these SNAP-authorized stores and determined their owners had engaged in SNAP fraud. The three store operators and most of the other defendants were arrested today by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation.

If convicted as charged, Ramirez, Garay and Salgado face a possible maximum sentence of nine years in state prison. The other defendants face up to three years in county jail.

The prosecutor is recommending bail be set at \$275,000 for the women and at \$20,000 for each of the other defendants.

The case remains under investigation by the Bureau of Investigation.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.